

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, and receipt of a certified copy of the priority document submitted May 2, 2001.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for considering the references cited with the Information Disclosure Statement filed December 27, 2001.

Status of the Application

Claims 1-12 and 14-23 are all the claims pending in the Application, as claims 21-23 are hereby added to more fully describe the invention, and as claim 13 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Claim Objection Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75

The Examiner has taken the position that claims 2 and 13 have the same scope. Claim 13 has been cancelled. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

Indefiniteness Rejection of Claims 2, 7, 10, 11 and 13 Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

The Examiner has rejected claims 2, 7, 10, 11 and 13 as being indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claims 2 and 13 are discussed above. Claims 7 and 10 have been amended to correct the informalities. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

Anticipation Rejections of Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 12, 13 15 and 16 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 4-8, 12, 13 15 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Kobayashi (US 6,347,653; hereinafer "Kobayashi").

The priority date (January 26, 2000) of the instant Application antedates Kobayashi's filing date (February 16, 2000). Thus, Applicant removes Kobayashi as a reference by submitting a verified translation of the Priority Document JP 2000-17535 herewith.

Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

Prior Art Rejections

The Examiner has rejected: (1) claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 12-15 and 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 05-155204 A (hereinafter "JP '204"); (2) claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 12-15 and 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 05-155204 A; and (3) claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Admitted Prior Art of the Application (hereinafter "APA") in view of JP 05-96913 (hereinafter "JP '913") and/or GB 691,587 (hereinafter "GB '587") and optionally further in view of EP 593288 (hereinafter "EP '288") and/or JP 11-139113 (hereinafter "JP '113").

However, Applicant respectfully submits that none of the applied references teach or suggest "a lug groove extending from a shoulder side of said tread toward a tire central plane such that the end, on the central plane side, of each lug groove is aligned on the central plane," as recited in independent claims 1, 12 and 17.

This feature is illustrated, for exemplary purposes only, in FIG. 1A of the Application, where the end of each lug groove 14, on the central plane side, is aligned on the central plane CL. This produces a construction where the end, on the central plane side, of each lug groove 14 erodes the auxiliary groove 16.

In contrast, none of the cited references disclose such a lug pattern. JP '204 discloses only that each lug groove 4 is terminated at one of the edges of the narrow circumferential recess 6 where the lug groove 4 intersects the circumferential recess 6, without eroding the circumferential recess 6 to the central plane. That is, the end of each lug groove 4, on the central plane side, of JP '204 does not reach the central plane (0-0), as understood from FIG. 3 thereof.

The APA discloses only "a pneumatic tire having a tread comprising lug grooves having a maximum depth of 60 mm or more but no recesses," which clearly fails to teach or suggest the unique lug pattern recited in claim 1. JP '913 and EP '288 fail to teach or suggest any lug grooves as claimed, the end of GB '587's grooves 12 are not aligned on any central plane, and JP '113's groove 12, on the central plane side, does not reach the central plane (EL).

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that none of the applied references teach or suggest the claimed lug pattern. Further, as all of the references are silent on such a feature, no combination of them would teach or suggest the unique feature of the tread pattern defined by independent claims 1, 12 and 17.

Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-12 and 14-23 are allowable. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the application now is in condition for allowance with all of the claims 1-12 and 14-23.

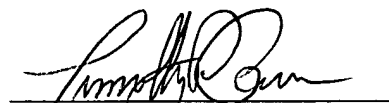
If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Appln. No.: 09/769,339

Attorney Docket # Q62555

Please charge any fees which may be required to maintain the pendency of this application, except for the Issue Fee, to our Deposit Account No. 19-4880.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: March 24, 2003

APPENDIX
VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 13 is canceled.

The claims are amended as follows:

1. (Amended) [An] A pneumatic tire comprising:

a tread;

a lug groove extending from a shoulder side of said tread toward a tire central plane such that the end, on the central plane side, of each lug groove is aligned on the central plane, the lug groove being provided in plurality at said tread in the tire circumferential direction to form a lug pattern; and

a recess portion being provided in a center region of the tread, the center region extending in the tire circumferential direction with a width that is 50% of a maximum width (W) of tire ground contacting portion so as to be symmetrical with respect to the tire central plane of said tread;

wherein a negative ratio of the center region other than said lug groove is set to 10% to 25%.

7. (Amended) A pneumatic tire according to claim 4, wherein a cross section in the tire radial direction of said lug groove bottom portion is inclined by substantially 80 degrees with respect to the tire central plane in a region having the width of 1/5 or more of a tread [halt] half width.

10. (Amended) A pneumatic tire according to claim 4, wherein said auxiliary groove is at least one [self-closing] closed type groove portion that is sequentially formed in the tire circumferential direction at a land portion positioned between the adjacent lug grooves.

12. (Amended) A pneumatic tire comprising:

a tread;

a lug groove extending from a shoulder side of said tread toward a tire central plane such that the end, on the central plane side, of each lug groove is aligned on the central plane, the lug groove being provided in plurality at said tread in the tire circumferential direction to form a lug pattern; and

a recess portion being provided in a center region of the tread, the center region extending in the tire circumferential direction with a width that is 50% of a maximum width (W) of tire ground contacting portion so as to be symmetrical with respect to the tire central plane of said tread;

wherein a depth of said recess portion is set to 10% to 45% of a maximum depth of said lug groove.

17. (Amended) [An] A pneumatic tire comprising:

a tread;

a lug groove extending from a shoulder side of said tread toward a tire central plane such that the end, on the central plane side, of each lug groove is aligned on the central plane, the lug groove being provided in plurality at said tread in the tire circumferential direction to form a lug pattern; and

a recess portion continuously provided in the tire circumferential direction on the tire central plane of said tread; and

a nother recess portion sequentially formed in the tire circumferential direction in a center region that extends in the tire circumferential direction with a width that is 50% of a maximum width (W) of tire ground contacting portion so as to be symmetrical with respect to the tire central plane of said tread;

wherein a negative ratio of the center region other than said lug groove is set to 10% to 25%.

Claims 21-23 are added as new claims.